
MR. LAMSON'S SERMON.



THE FOUNDATION OF OUR CONFIDENCE IN THE SAVIOUR.

A

SERMON,

PREACHED AT THE ORDINATION

OF THE

REV. CHARLES C. SEWALL,

AS MINISTER OF THE

FIRST UNITARIAN CHURCH IN DANVERS,

APRIL 11, 1827.

BY ALVAN LAMSON,

MINISTER OF THE FIRST CHURCH IN DEDHAM.

PUBLISHED FOR THE FIRST UNITARIAN CHURCH IN DANVERS.

DEDHAM:

PRINTED BY H. & W. H. MANN.

1827.

District of Massachusetts, to wit :

District Clerk's Office.

BE IT REMEMBERED, That on the the twenty-fifth day of April, A. D. 1827, in the fifty-first year of the Independence of the United States of America, HERMAN and WILLIAM H. MANN, of the said district, have deposited in this office the title of a book, the right whereof they claim as proprietors, in the words following, to wit :

"The foundation of our confidence in the Saviour. A SERMON preached at the Ordination of the Rev. CHARLES C. SEWALL, as minister of the first Unitarian Church in Danvers, April 11, 1827. By ALVAN LAMSON, minister of the first Church in Dedham. Published for the first Unitarian Church in Danvers."

In conformity to the act of the Congress of the United States, entitled "an act for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of maps, charts and books, to the authors and proprietors of such copies, during the times therein mentioned ;" and also to an act entitled "an act supplementary to an act, entitled, an act for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of maps, charts and books to the authors and proprietors of such copies during the times therein mentioned ; and extending the benefits thereof to the arts of designing, engraving and etching historical and other prints."

JNO. W. DAVIS,

Clerk of the District of Massachusetts.

SERMON.

JOHN x: 36.

Whom the Father hath sanctified and sent into the world.

THE doctrine of the strict unity of the Divine nature, as opposed to all Trinitarian distinctions and refinements, is venerated by its friends, not simply because they think it conformable to truth, to the conclusions of reason, and uniform strain of revelation; they value and cherish it as peculiarly fitted to extend the triumphs of genuine, practical religion. They believe, that christianity can never produce its noblest and best fruits, never manifest to the full its sublime and heaven-born energies, while this doctrine remains obscured; and they view, therefore, with deep regret, the dread with which it fills the minds of a large portion of their fellow christians. This dread is aggravated, if not inspired, by a vague impression, that the hypothesis, which ascribes to Jesus only finite and derived perfections, weakens the ground of our confidence in

him. Many, we doubt not, honest minds regard with distrust, perhaps refuse to weigh, the arguments in favour of Unitarianism, from a sort of indefinite suspicion or belief that the doctrine, they are brought to confirm, may be found, at last, to yield only treacherous support; that it is earthly, chilling, and dangerous; that it utterly fails of meeting the wants of the sinner; that it destroys the value and efficacy of Christ's teaching and cross, and thus leaves the guilt-burdened soul a prey to all the terrors of agony and despair.

Such is one of the popular charges against Unitarianism; and one of those, which are most frequently and strongly urged. It is heard from all parts, and seems to be the weapon, at the present day, most relied on by those, who combat our peculiar views of Christianity. It is often, at least, we feel compelled to say, presented less in the form of dispassionate argument, than of an earnest address to the imagination and feelings. It aims not so much to refute our sentiments, as to render them odious. It is adapted to impress the minds of those, who, little accustomed to reason and reflect, are easily wrought upon by a strain of bold and glowing eloquence. But however specious and imposing it may appear, when set off with the heightenings of rhetorick, and uttered in a tone of confident assertion, it vanishes upon the slightest examination. No charge, in fact, could be more destitute of support. It grows out of a total misconception of the foundation of our trust in Jesus. This four-

dation, we conceive, remains the same on all the several theories, which are adopted concerning his original attributes. We build not on the dignity of his nature, but on the divinity of his mission;—on the fact, that he spoke and acted by divine impulse and authority; in the language of our text, that the ‘Father sanctified and sent him into the world.’

We consider this view of the foundation of our hopes in Christ one of immense interest and importance, because it goes to show that Christians are in harmony on the most essential, we may say the only essential, point of faith. A belief of this point,—the divinity of our Lord’s mission—entitles persons to the name of Christians in the original and correct acceptation of the term, prepares them to listen to Jesus as one, who brought us the words of everlasting life, to go to him and to his religion for direction, for support, and solace now, and to hope for the pardon and happiness to be hereafter dispensed in his name. Whatever different and conflicting sentiments men entertain concerning his person, as long as they admit this one point, they stand on common ground. There is only one basis of their trust and hopes in Christ, and the speculations, in which they indulge on the subject of his original nature and essence, whatever conclusions they suggest, leave that basis untouched.

This doctrine is not claimed as altogether peculiar to ourselves. We occasionally find traces of it in the writings of Trinitarians, though pursued in

its consequences it overthrows a great deal of Trinitarian reasoning ; at the same time, it relieves Unitarianism of a vast weight of odium, for it shows, that it is full and adequate on the very point, on which it has been pronounced most defective, and thus lays at rest forever the charge, that it tends to fill the mind of the contrite sinner with gloomy apprehensions and distrust.

A doctrine of so much importance deserves to be carefully illustrated and enforced, and may furnish a topick not unsuited to the present occasion. For evidence of its truth, and of the weight attached to it by our Saviour, we must appeal to the sacred writings, and we do this with a thorough persuasion, that the proofs they afford of the correctness of our position are full and overwhelming. The current language of the New Testament urges us to confide in Jesus, to surrender our whole soul, spirit, and affections to be moulded according to his will and purpose, not on account of the perfections, with which he was originally clothed, but solely on account of the powers, with which the Father saw fit to invest him. We are to venerate and trust him not for his underived attributes, but for the riches of derived excellence ; not for the stamp of divinity he bore in his person, but on his character and mission. Not one word is employed, not the least hint is dropped, which would lead us to suppose, that he saves us by virtue of his own unborrowed greatness. What was the sentiment he seemed particularly anxious to impress on the minds of those,

whom the fame of his wisdom, or of his miracles, drew around him? What the style, in which he addressed them? What the belief it unavoidably inspires? That the value of his ministrations depended on the original mode of his existence, or the time at which it commenced? No. We learn from the records of his life and instructions, that those ministrations owe all their worth and efficacy to that greater Being, who ordained and accepted them.

To place this idea in a strong light, to show that the basis, and the only basis, of our confidence in the Saviour, and of the benefits conveyed to us through him is such as I have described it, I propose to consider severally his instructions, his death, and present agency.

I. His instructions.

The doctrines of Jesus have, in the view of all Christians, a value and certainty, to which mere human reasoning never aspires. We are persuaded, that he spoke as never man spake, that he uttered truths which man's wisdom could never teach. We bow to his revelations, as authorised disclosures of God's mind and will. We go to the simple narratives of the Evangelists, we endeavour to gather up his precious words, we listen to catch every sound, which falls from his lips, for we are confident, that the knowledge he imparted is from above, and came down from the Father of lights. Now whence does this confidence, this reverence for our Saviour's words, which, in the mind of the pious Chris-

tian, grows and strengthens with time, arise? It must originate in the persuasion, either that he partook of a divine nature, or that he was divinely illumined; either that he was God, or was from God, was commissioned, taught and directed by him. And we see not why his revelations would not have as strong marks of truth, and ought not to inspire as much reverence, in the latter case, as in the former. Let us be convinced beyond all doubt, that a divine spirit rested on him, that he was admitted to a familiarity with the counsels of heaven, expressed in the scriptures by the phrase, being 'in the bosom of the Father,' that God was with him and dwelt in him, as he has dwelt in no other being, we are compelled to receive his teachings as the teachings of the Father. They bear as broad a stamp of divinity, as decided features of a heavenly origin, as we can demand, or the Deity bestow. We feel that nothing is wanting to inspire the utmost veneration for them. They have God for their author as truly and strictly, as if he were present and uttered them. Jesus was only the organ, through which he conveyed them to our understanding and senses. As such, and as such alone, he asks to be heard. He attributes nothing to his own affluence and fulness, but with the meekness of true and profound piety, ascribes all to his Father's Gift. 'My doctrine is not mine,' he says, 'but his that sent me.' 'He that sent me is true, and I speak to the world those things, which I have heard of him.' 'I have not spoken of myself, but

the Father, who sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say and what I should speak. Whatsoever I speak, therefore, even as the Father hath said unto me I speak.' 'All things I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.'*

I might quote much more to the same effect. Now I would ask any sober and reflecting person, whether it is supposable, whether it is possible, that Jesus would have spoken thus, had he been desirous of inspiring a belief of his original dignity and omniscience, as the basis of our respect for his instructions. No. Such language could have been employed only with one view. It expresses one great and prominent sentiment, and expresses it fully and strongly. It teaches us, as plainly as words can, that he claimed to be heard as one inspired, taught, and sent of God, and in no other character. This is the only construction, which the laws of common sense and sound criticism allow us to put upon it. Every other construction is manifestly forced and erroneous. The distinction sometimes resorted to between an inferiority of nature, and an official inferiority, and the old fiction of two natures, will not explain it except on principles, which would render the bible an incomprehensible book, and have the effect of introducing total uncertainty into all human language. The fundamental rule of interpretation, which requires words to be un-

* John vii. 16. viii. 26. xii. 49, 50. xv. 15.

derstood in their obvious and unembarrassed sense, and according to established usage, unless the general strain of the discourse or argument in which they occur, the known views of the author, his usual mode of expressing himself, and the probability that he does not mean to utter an absurdity, suggest some modification as necessary, compels us to believe, that our Lord, by the above mentioned and similar expressions, meant to direct the attention of his hearers to his divine mission, as the sole ground of their confidence in him. Had he intended to give their thoughts this direction, he could not have chosen words better fitted for his purpose. We have no choice left us but either to suppose, that such was his intention, or to sit down in utter despair of ever being able to comprehend his language.

The miracles of our Lord were intended to confirm the sentiment so anxiously inculcated in that class of passages to which I have referred. They were wrought not to prove the dignity of his person, but the origin of his mission. This is a very important distinction, and one which is fully authorised by the language of the New Testament. No instance, we feel safe in affirming, can be produced, in which our Lord himself, or his apostles, speak of the miraculous powers, with which he was invested, as implying an exalted nature;—no instance in which those powers were exerted with a view to inspire a reverence for the greatness of his underived attributes, or suggest the inference that he partook of a divine essence.

On the contrary, he was careful to forewarn his followers against drawing any such inference from the astonishing works, of which they were spectators. He tells them that of himself he can do nothing,*—that all his power was given him of his Father; and it was given, as he expressly asserts, as the seal of his heavenly mission. It proved, and was intended to prove, nothing as to his rank or essence. ‘The works, which the Father hath given me to finish,’ he observes, ‘the same works, that I do, bear witness of me that the Father hath sent me.’† Such was their design; and so, I add, they were viewed by those, who witnessed them. Thus Nicodemus says to him, ‘Rabbi, we know that thou art a Teacher come from God, for no man can do these miracles, which thou dost, except God be with him.’‡ A similar sentiment was frequently expressed by others during the term of our Lord’s ministry, and by his Apostles after his death. His miraculous gifts were regarded as establishing the fact, that he was divinely raised up, sent, and aided, and nothing more. It remained for subsequent ages, when men had departed from the simplicity, which was in Christ, to turn them into an argument for his original and independent divinity.

The true basis, then, of our reverence for the words of our Saviour, if we may trust our bibles, is the commission he received from the Father to instruct the world. His doctrines derive their whole

* John v. 30.

† John v. 36.

‡ John iii. 2.

value and weight from the circumstance, that he was a Teacher sent from God, that God was with him, and in token of his presence, and of the all important work he had committed to him, bestowed on him the power of working miracles.—Such is the doctrine breathed from almost every page of the New Testament. It appears astonishing, that its truth should ever have been questioned; that after the most solemn assurances of our Lord, that he was only the medium through which God conversed with man, that the gracious words, which fell from his lips, were not his own, but proceeded from the Father, any other ground of our confidence in his revelations should have been suggested.

II. I now pass to my second general topick, the efficacy of Christ's sufferings. That his death was highly subservient to the object he came into the world to accomplish is doubted by none. It tended in itself, and especially as followed by his resurrection, to add weight to his instructions, to overcome indifference, to touch the sensibility, and send a healing and quickening influence to the heart. It has, in the opinion of all christians, an important moral efficacy. It is one of the numerous means, which christianity employs for bringing the sinner to repentance, forming in him the character God approves, and thus procuring for him pardon and felicity. It operates on man, and, in this view, performs an office of momentous value and importance.

A further efficacy, it is well known, has been us-

ually contended for, though different views are entertained of its nature. Some of these views may be easily shown to be encumbered with difficulties, or lead to consequences, which compel us to reject them. Thus we cannot hesitate, for one moment, to pronounce the popular notion, that the sufferings of Christ operate on God, by making satisfaction to his justice, and thus disposing or enabling him to feel and extend compassion to his sinning and penitent offspring, as unscriptural, absurd and impious; for it goes to rob the Deity of his unalterable attributes of love and mercy, and convert him into an unfeeling and changeful tyrant, whose indulgence and favour must be purchased with the price of blood. The justice, which is spoken of, and which is supposed to be satisfied by the sufferings of Jesus, is not the justice of a father, not justice in the best and noblest sense of the term, an exalted and godlike quality, which distinguishes between the penitent and impenitent, which chastens that it may reform sin, which makes use of gentle invitations of love, and soft whispers of hope, which resorts to severity only when milder methods have been exhausted, and employs no more of it than is needed to accomplish the ends of benevolence by bringing the wanderer back to God, to virtue and to happiness. No. It is narrow, vindictive justice; arbitrary will, justice viewed not so much the property of the best, as of the most despotick, natures; not so much the quality of a moral agent, as a sort of abstract phantom, having feelings, views

and interests of its own, jealous of its dignity, and suspicious of insult, rigorous, implacable, revengeful; demanding a full equivalent of suffering for every offence. Justice of the former kind, moral justice, which is the only justice we can without impiety ascribe to the Deity, includes compassion as part of itself. It does not exact of the reformed transgressor the punishment, which is due only to hardened and persevering iniquity. It shudders at the idea of inflicting on the penitent the same chastisement, which is inflicted on the careless and obdurate. It delights in mercy still more than in judgment. Its favourite work and object, in fact, are to inspire in the offender sorrow and regret for having offended; to encourage his repentance, and urge him to perfect it; to watch over and cherish within him all good affections; finally, to enrich his soul with genuine, exalted and heavenly virtue as the source of all true peace and happiness. To withhold compassion from a penitent, and therefore deserving object, is wholly foreign from its nature, argues a spirit of severity, and partakes of a character of substantial injustice. We cannot ascribe such a spirit and character to God without blotting out his venerable perfections, effacing his divinity, divesting him not merely of the affections of a Father, but of all the attributes of a moral being.

Mercy to the contrite and reformed, like approbation of goodness, is a moral affection, which a perfect being cannot lay down without changing his whole nature. It must be inspired by moral

and personal qualities in its object ; it can be inspired by no other ; nor can it be transferred from one object to another of a different and opposite character, from one that is deserving to one that is worthless. No foreign consideration can produce or extinguish it. This and all other moral affections, we are persuaded, are strong and perfect in the Deity ; he could not, therefore, love and approve the wicked any the more because a noble and accepted victim consented to be sacrificed for them, and thus render his merits precious in the sight of heaven. That he did not spare such a victim, but freely gave him for us, may with propriety be urged as a strong evidence and expression of his compassion towards his creatures, but it could in no sense generate that compassion, or cause any change in those moral affections of approbation and disapprobation, which he must feel towards his intelligent offspring exactly corresponding to character.—A deep sense of the turpitude of sin, remorse for having become stained with it, and persevering efforts to wipe off its pollutions, and obtain the temper and habits, prescribed by reason, and inculcated by the precepts of Jesus Christ, are right and fit ; they are such as become the sinner ; such as entitle him to the regard and indulgence of all intelligent natures. Not to feel and show this regard and indulgence would suppose a want of those affections and principles, which should be found in all moral beings, and of which God especially, as standing at the head of all such beings in the universe, the

fountain and example of all exalted justice, all beneficence and mercy, cannot surely be destitute.

The notion that Christ's sufferings were intended to satisfy divine justice, though not yet abandoned, is not, perhaps, as prevalent now, as it has been in some former times. A more modern theory is, that the sacrifice of an exalted victim, though not viewed in the light of a satisfaction, and not designed to operate on God, was necessary to display his hatred of iniquity, and to maintain the respect due to his laws; that to pardon sin without it would produce contempt for his justice, and thus defeat the ends of moral government. This mode of viewing the subject appears equally erroneous with that just noticed. It drops, to be sure, some of the more odious features of the old system; it partakes a little more of the vague and mystical; its absurdity is not quite as palpable, but it is equally repugnant to reason and to the uniform sense of the sacred writings.

How God manifests his love of justice and abhorrence of sin by inflicting on a deserving object the sufferings due only to the undeserving, or, for it resolves itself into this at last, by punishing the innocent to let the guilty escape, is more than we are able to comprehend. The very reverse of this would seem to follow. The spectacle of a sinless being stretched on the cross to expiate the crimes of the wicked, or prepare the way for their forgiveness, far from inspiring a reverence for God's moral attributes, is, according to our view, fitted

effectually to weaken or destroy it. It would furnish as strong an argument of his injustice and cruelty as could possibly be offered to our minds. The greatness of our Lord's sufferings, voluntarily met to redeem us from the dominion and punishment of sin, should certainly cause us to reflect on the bitter and tremendous consequences of persevering in it. So much would not have been undergone to avert from us any trifling evil. But when we are told, that those sufferings, instead of being viewed as a sacrifice made in the cause of virtue and humanity, are to be regarded as an exhibition designed to illustrate God's supreme regard for justice, and without which he would have been compelled, in order to secure the ends of his government, to punish sin to the utmost, though wept over and forsaken, we are amazed at the extraordinary suggestion; and are tempted to ask, what sort of justice is that, a fear of which must be inspired by the shedding of such precious blood? And what sort of government that, which rests on such justice as its basis? Surely it is not a government, which would be permitted to stand on earth for an hour.

We cannot therefore admit the hypothesis, that the sufferings of Christ were intended to display God's justice, or be a substitute for the never-ending punishment, which, we are told, he must have inflicted without it, alike on the penitent and impenitent? It is not needed to secure the honor of his laws, and, if it were needed for this purpose, it utterly fails of accomplishing it. The honor of

God's laws is sufficiently provided for, we conceive, by the assurance, that we must repent and submit to his will and commands, as the only condition of pardon; that if we persist in impenitence, we shall in no wise go unpunished. We do not see what consideration could be better fitted to inspire respect for those laws. Obey and live, disobey and perish; repent and be forgiven, continue impenitent and suffer, is language, which must affect our hearts, if any language can. Those who remain deaf to such language, would hardly, we think, be deterred from sin and won to goodness by the spectacle of a substitute doomed to undergo chastisement in their stead.

Suppose that an earthly monarch should make proclamation to his rebellious subjects of a remote province to the following effect.—I am long suffering and gracious, and not willing that ye should perish in your rebellion; I therefore sent among you one, who partook of my own greatness, and was the heir of my throne, to persuade you to submit and resume your allegiance. But though merciful, my love of justice and desire to maintain the authority of my laws rendered it impossible for me to pardon you simply upon repentance and a return to duty; I therefore permitted you to take my messenger, who was my son and equal, and, in your blindness and malice, to bring him before your tribunal, and after a disorderly trial, during which no crime or fault was proved against him, to drag him to the place of execution, and there put him to death

in the manner, in which ye were wont to put to death the vilest malefactors. By this transaction my firm regard for justice is made manifest, the honor of my laws is rendered safe, and I am now authorized to exercise my prerogative of pardon towards such of you as repent and become in future my dutiful subjects.—This communication, we believe, would be received with one uniform feeling of contempt, disgust and horror. We are sure it would be for nothing so ill fitted as to inspire reverence for its author, or respect for his administration and laws. Yet such is precisely the language, in which the hypothesis alluded to supposes God to address his creatures.

A large class of christians, however, rejecting the before mentioned views of the death of Christ, are still not satisfied with ascribing to it simply a moral efficacy. They think, that the scriptures represent it as a method, an instrument, or procuring cause of human forgiveness in a different and higher sense, making it the means of rendering repentance available to pardon. Whether this opinion be correct, or rests merely on some Jewish reasoning, and Rabbinical and figurative expressions, which require to be interpreted cautiously, and with considerable latitude, it does not fall within the design of my present remarks to examine. All which is now contended for is, that if the death of Jesus have any efficacy of this kind, it must owe it solely to God's special appointment. Nothing would induce us to believe for a single moment, that the an-

guish, either bodily or mental, of any being however exalted, could, naturally and of itself, have any influence in removing the guilt or delivering us from the punishment of sin. It could not have the effect, and was not wanted, to excite God's compassion towards his creatures, or call forth expressions of it in their favour. Was the spectacle of a sinless being, exposed as a malefactor on the cross, of a nature to soothe or gratify him? Was it necessary, that having glutted his thirst of vengeance by the sight, he might turn away appeased and softened? No. He takes no pleasure in cruelty; he delights not in blood. If the sacrifice of an innocent sufferer, therefore, was the price or instrument of our forgiveness, or in any way conduced to it, except so far as it was adapted to excite and nourish our virtue, and thus render us fit subjects of pardon, it must have become such only because God, for reasons not explained to us, expressly ordained it; and then the nature and rank of the sufferer cease to be of any importance. Nothing depends on them, but all rests on the divine will and appointment. The only question, which we are concerned to settle, then is, has God ordained the sacrifice? If so, it must be an adequate one. We have no right to doubt the sufficiency of the victim chosen and accepted of him, or to say that he could not have selected a being of a different order, whose death, had he so pleased, would have had the same efficacy. Had he fixed on any other being in the universe, of however inferiour a nature, as the medium of conveying the

benefits of his mercy to the world, that being would have been rendered competent by the very act of God choosing and ordaining him; and thus the argument for the original dignity of our Lord's nature, from the supposed necessity of an exalted victim, falls to the ground.

It is asserted, we know, that there is something peculiarly soothing in the belief, that a being of an infinite nature stands between God and us to urge his merits in our behalf. Such a belief, we are told, is fitted more than any other to cheer and sustain the soul weighed down by a sense of imperfection and unworthiness. If so, it is because we are accustomed to false and degrading conceptions of the Divine Being. Right views of him are suited not more to fill us with reverence, than with exalted love and unshaken trust. We regard it as one of the heaviest charges against that mass of gloomy and corrupt doctrines, which have for ages overshadowed Christianity, that they lead men to transfer to another those affections, which are primarily due only to the Supreme Divinity. They tend to exalt the Saviour above God in our love and esteem. It is not surprising, that a mind fully persuaded of the truth of the popular doctrines concerning God and Jesus, and thoroughly imbued with their spirit, should turn away with shuddering from the sterner attributes of the Father to repose in the milder nature of the Son. The latter is represented as possessing a character far more attractive of the two. The Father is clothed with awe-

inspiring power, and holds the balance of inflexible and severe justice; the son is surrounded with the more winning glories of placability and love. The Father, with the cruelty of a remorseless tyrant, dooms the whole human race to remediless and everlasting wo, to expiate the offence of their original ancestor; the Son, moved by infinite compassion, steps forward to turn aside his almighty wrath by his own death, and, as the price of his blood, is permitted to take a select number of ransomed souls with him to the abodes of heavenly felicity, the rest, comprising a large part of mankind, being left to drag out a never-ending existence in sorrows unutterable. It would be strange if doctrines, fitted to leave such impressions on the mind, should nourish that spirit of deep and confiding piety, which looks to the Universal Father as the only refuge of the guilt-burdened and sorrow-stricken soul. But these doctrines Unitarianism rejects as absurd and monstrous fictions. We consider it one mark of its truth and great practical value, that it inculcates those views of God, which tend to render a belief of his all-surrounding power and presence, not a chilling and melancholy persuasion we would, if possible, forever banish from our minds, but a fond and cherished sentiment; one to which the mind naturally turns in sorrow, in weakness, in temptation, and the agony of disease and death; a sentiment, the destruction of which would darken the whole soul, and throw a more than funereal sadness over the universe.

Further, we shall be told, that admitting the efficacy of Christ's sufferings is to be attributed to the will and acceptance of the Deity, still the object for which he was suspended on the cross implies his Divinity; that God in selecting an agent to accomplish this object was compelled, by the nature of the case, to fix on one partaking of the attribute of infinity. A finite being, it is said, could not make adequate propitiation for sin, because sin, viewed as committed against an infinite Object, has infinite guilt, and therefore requires an infinite atonement, and such atonement could be made only by a being himself infinite. But this is fallacious reasoning,—flimsy, barefaced sophistry.

In the first place, it is a gross abuse of language to assert, that sin, because committed against an infinite Being, has in any sense features of infinity. The nature of the object, against whom the offence is committed, aggravates it, only as it implies insensibility, presumption, or perverseness in the offender. To trespass against a Being, who deserves to be loved with all the understanding, soul, and strength, is an offence of an exceedingly dark hue. Still it is human, it is finite; it is an act of a finite being, and as such can never partake of the character of infinity.

Besides, if sin is infinite, because committed against an infinite Being, then all and every sin is so, and therefore equal, for infinity admits of no degrees. The consequence is, that he who trespasses once is equally guilty in the sight of God,

equally an object of his abhorrence with one, who trespasses with every breath. Nothing can add to the blackness of infinite guilt, nothing increase the load of it: and thus we hear it sometimes asserted, that 'one sin is sufficient to sink the sinner to the lowest depths of hell.'—A theory encumbered with such difficulties, we need not say, cannot be true. It is opposed to reason, to the common sentiments and common feelings of human nature. It confounds the distinctions of right and wrong, embarrasses our moral faculties, and destroys all confidence in their decisions. We have a new standard of merit and demerit, of virtue and vice, and before our language can become conformed to that standard, our mode of thinking and expressing ourselves on the moral qualities of temper and actions, the whole vocabulary of common life, in fact, as well as of ethicks and religion, must undergo a revolution.—But I have bestowed more attention on the argument for the infinite nature of sin than it deserves. The bare statement of it is sufficient to refute it, for it bears the character of extravagance and absurdity on every feature.

I have said that the reasoning alluded to contains in it barefaced sophistry. In truth sophistry never appeared under a thinner veil, and I know not whether we ought to be more surprised at its grossness, or at the confidence, bold, unblushing confidence with which it is urged. Christ must have been an infinite Being, we are informed, because no other could have made adequate atone-

ment for sin. But would those, who reason thus, be really understood to say that an infinite Being breathed out his soul in agony on the cross; that the God of nature was really betrayed, arrested, condemned, and executed, as a malefactor by finite and frail children of dust; that the omnipotent and omnipresent Father and Preserver of the universe was confined three days in a shroud and tomb furnished by the compassion of his creatures? Expressions implying something equivalent to this, it is true, occur both in older and more modern writings. But we are charitable enough to suppose, that they originate in mere carelessness, or a fondness for gross and overcharged pictures and representations; that were those, who use them, asked whether they mean to assert, that God was really fastened to the cross, died, was buried, and the third day rose again, they would disclaim any such intention. The Deity is incapable of suffering. On the supposition, therefore, that Christ possessed a Divine, as well as human, nature, he suffered only in the latter, only as man. No infinite Nature suffered, or could suffer. Why then talk of an infinite atonement? No such atonement, in the sense in which it is understood by its advocates, was ever made, or could be made. The hypothesis of Christ's Divinity does not provide for it, because it furnishes only a finite and human sufferer, and with respect to the satisfaction or atonement, therefore, is reduced to a level with the hypothesis of his simple humanity.

Let us not, then, be told that the object for which Christ died, implies his Divinity. No assertion can be more destitute of foundation, or more outrage reason and common sense.—But I forbear. Enough has been said to show, that the worth and efficacy of our Saviour's instructions and death depend on a consideration entirely foreign from the dignity of his nature.

III. So too I observe of the agency he now exercises, of whatever nature it be, it owes its whole interest and importance to the Divine will and appointment. His inherent Divinity is not made the basis of any of those benefits he confers on us, or of any act he performs, in his present state of exaltation, any more than of the benefits derived from his ministry and sufferings on earth. All the glories of that state, all the honors, privileges, and offices it implies, are expressly referred to the Father, 'who made him both Lord and Christ'—'who exalted him and gave him a name'—'raised him from the dead and gave him glory'—'appointed him heir of all things'—committed all judgment to him,' having 'appointed a day, in which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath chosen, whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.'*

Nor are we authorized to say that any of these

* Acts ii. 36. Phil. ii. 9. I. Peter i. 21. Heb. i. 2. John v. 22. Acts xvii. 31.

honors, or any part of this agency, suppose him originally to have partaken of a Divine nature. The expressions, in which he is spoken of as having received power to judge the world, admitting that they are to be taken literally, and not as they may be understood, figuratively, as signifying only that we shall be judged according to the laws and spirit of his gospel, are far from implying any attributes strictly infinite. The scriptures certainly never allude to such attributes as necessary to the exercise of this power. They never in the remotest way insinuate, that it was bestowed on him because he possessed an exalted nature. Just the reverse. God 'gave him authority to execute judgment, because he was the son of man,'* partook of our nature, and was, therefore, capable of being 'touched with the feeling of our infirmities.'

Our confidence in the Saviour, then, in what he did and suffered on earth, in what he now performs in heaven, in his past and future ministrations and offices, is inspired solely by a belief of his divine mission. All his sufficiency is of God, who sent him to be the Saviour of the world, and who, we are certain, would not leave him incompetent to the work committed to him. With the magnitude of that work we trust that we are fully impressed. To remove the clouds of ignorance, and cure the moral maladies of human nature; to purge the soul from corrupt and earth-born passions, and in-

* John v. 27.

fuse into it all heavenly and benevolent affections ; to carry divine solace and hope into the abodes of despondency and affliction ; to vanquish death and confer the gift of everlasting life and happiness, is an achievement too vast for human utterance—an achievement which God alone can accomplish. But who shall limit him in the selection of means for perfecting it ? Who shall lay restraints on omnipotence ? Who shall say that the universal Father, as the cause and Fountain of all capacities and might, cannot clothe the humblest of his offspring with power adequate to accomplish the noblest purpose of his beneficence ? Can any instrument be feeble in his hands ? Can he not strengthen the weak, and perfect the frail ? In providing for our rescue from sin, from suffering, and despondency, was he compelled to act only through a particular medium ? had he no choice of agents—no ability to raise up and endow whom he would ? particularly, was he compelled to employ one, who partook of his nature and shared his throne ?—Convinced that Jesus was commissioned and sent by him to be the dispenser of his best gifts to man, we think that we have reason enough for confiding in him. In doing this, we confide not in mere human, not in angelick and derived power and excellence ; we rest on the truth, the wisdom, and beneficence of that great Being who formed, sustains, and fills all things.

The objection so strenuously urged against Unitarianism, that it does not fully meet the wants of

the sinner, does not provide for his pardon and security, thus disappears the moment we examine dispassionately the basis on which, according to the uniform language of the New Testament, our confidence in Jesus is placed. It originates altogether in a misapprehension concerning the ground on which he claims to be heard and trusted. If, divesting our understandings of the influence of popular and floating opinions, we sit down calmly, and endeavour to ascertain the ultimate fact or doctrine on which the fabrick of our hopes as christians rests as its main pillar, we shall find that Unitarianism embraces this fact or doctrine, that it builds exclusively upon it, that it never ceases to urge it as the foundation of all our expectations of benefit from the Saviour. It thus has the advantage over all other systems, we think, in its truth, its beautiful simplicity, and its fitness to produce a deep and abiding effect on the heart. Instead of embarrassing our minds and taxing our credulity, by asking us to believe doctrines of which their mysterious, abstruse, and incomprehensible nature is their least obnoxious feature, it points to one great and primary fact or sentiment, which is level to every capacity, and the admission of which is enough to supply the strongest motives and excitements to virtue, enough for safety, for solace, and for final happiness.—Far from having any tendency to fill the mind of the sinner with despair, it holds the only language which is capable of affording him any rational hope

and trust. Did it direct his attention to the bought favour of a tyrant,—bought by the incarnation and sufferings of a God,—as the foundation of his safety, he might tell us that it taught a doctrine adapted only to inspire melancholy, distrust, and terror. It is true, he might say to us, you talk to me of a substitute, an exalted and innocent personage, on whom he has spent the swift arrows of his wrath; and you inform me that he is now appeased, that his justice is satisfied, that he is willing and authorized to forgive. But, meanwhile, what a conception you have taught me to form of God! What a monster you have held up as an object of my reverence and trust! Surely you do not ask me to repose confidence in such a Being. I can view him only with shuddering and horror. The belief that he formed and governs the universe would fill me with gloom, which nothing could effectually alleviate. It would be a truly appalling sentiment, an abhorred persuasion, from which I would willingly take refuge in the less chilling creed of the Atheist.

But Unitarianism furnishes other ground of confidence and hope. It soothes and sustains the contrite and burdened spirit by carrying the thoughts up to the one infinite Father, who embraces the whole of his offspring in the arms of his benevolence, and whose unbought compassion raised up and sent Jesus with power to heal and to save. It presents to our anxious minds, a Being in whom our highest and best affections are capable of being

concentrated, whom we can venerate, and love, and trust, not on account of what another has done or suffered to render him propitious, but on account of his own everlasting and unchangeable attributes. That such a doctrine should be charged with a tendency to weaken the foundation of the sinner's trust, and add despair to remorse, is really matter of no small surprise and astonishment. To us, we repeat, it appears to address him in the only language which is fitted to yield him comfort and solace. Instead of placing his expectations of pardon on a foundation, which may totter and sink under him, it places them on the only foundation which can never be shaken. The arm, on which he leans, is omnipotent, and the rock of his trust the throne of the Eternal.

We are accused of not feeling sufficient veneration for the Saviour, of undervaluing what he has performed for us, of stripping his religion of all its noble and distinguishing attributes, of dimming its glories, and frittering it down to a system of dry, frigid, and lifeless morality. Such charges, we are willing to believe, originate in ignorance and misconception concerning the form in which christianity is received by us. Unitarianism has been misunderstood, or but imperfectly comprehended, by the great mass of those, who have been loudest in abusing and denouncing it. The term has suggested to the minds of its opponents only the vague idea of some monstrous and heart-chilling delusion, something hardly yielding, in impiety, to the im-

posture of Mahomet, a cunning forgery of Satan fitted to inflate pride, and favor the indolent and corrupt propensities of the heart, by encouraging trust in human merit, administering opiates, using smooth and honied speech, and thus luring its dreamy and self applauding votaries onward in the broad and downward road of destruction. That persons having these impressions on the subject of Unitarianism should think and speak of it with horror, need not surprise us. It is not, however, Unitarianism which they dread and war against in their minds, but a hideous phantom, a deformed spectre, which has no existence out of their own imagination. Were Unitarianism understood by them, we do not say that it would be in all cases approved. This is not to be expected, for it is opposed to some sentiments, which were probably among the first with which their minds were imbued, which struck deep root therefore, and which have been nourished and strengthened by a thousand influences. But we believe that it would be found, in a majority of instances, to coincide with their own views and feelings—those views and feelings, which are intrenched in the deepest recesses of their understandings and hearts—to an extent which would greatly astonish them. We believe that it would find an echo in many breasts, which now shudder at the very name of it; and that those who should continue to reject it as not conformable to truth, would, with few exceptions, view it with diminished horror and alarm. They would

find it not that monstrous compound of impiety, folly, and pride, which they have been led to imagine it. They would not, we trust, discover us to be wanting in due veneration for the Saviour, and a due sense of the worth of his religion.—Is it nothing that we venerate him as a being divinely commissioned and sent to be unto us a Prince and a Saviour, in whom dwelt all the fulness of the Divinity—through whom God manifested himself, as he had never before manifested himself, to the world—who was the bright effulgence of the Father's glory, and express image, representative, copy or resemblance of his character and person—from whose words, life, and actions, breathed a spirit of divine wisdom and excellence—who was authorized to make known the conditions of human forgiveness—whose doctrines, example, and cross have a quickening and restoring efficacy—who, by the power and truth of God dwelling and operating in and through him, was rendered able to save to the uttermost? Is it nothing that we venerate him as we venerate no earthly master—no mere human Saviour, guide, example, and reformer—that we regard him as sustaining a character and relations, which entitle him to the homage of all understandings, and love of all hearts—that though unseen, we believe, we confide, we rejoice in him, as the Author and Finisher of our faith, the Pattern of our charity, and Teacher of 'hopes that overstep the grave'? Do his friends and followers show their sense of his divine worth and excellence by

maintaining particular views of his person and essence, and bestowing on him high-sounding names and epithets, rather than by striving to breath his spirit, and be conformed to his image—endeavouring to render themselves familiar with his instructions, less for the purpose of extracting from them weapons of theological controversy, than of exciting holy affections, of inflaming their hearts with a love and ardent thirst of excellence, of nourishing a spirit of enlarged benevolence, of acquiring firmness in the hour of temptation, strength in their moral conflicts, support and comfort in adversity and sorrow, and hope in dissolution ?

Nor do we rob his religion of any of those attributes, which tend to give it power over the mind, and render it a most important instrument of human reform and virtue. We do not subtract from its value and efficacy, as an agent mighty to the pulling down of every strong hold of sin within the breast, able to work powerfully in our hearts, and build us up in faith, in love, and true holiness. We only relieve it, we think, of a load of corrupt doctrines, which have darkened its visage, choked its influence, and arrayed against it some of the most inveterate prejudices of human nature. We take away what is extraneous, that its original and majestick features, its noble simplicity, its life-giving energy may be more apparent. We view it not as a mere code of ethicks, not as a system of cold, speculative, and earthly morality. We esteem it especially as a revelation of divine truth, as an-

nouncing the doctrine of pardon and life, as a voice of counsel, of admonition, of encouragement, and hope, issuing from the throne of God's mercy, and uttering his gracious will and purposes. We value it as the source of all that is most precious in our joys, and soothing in our sorrows—as our weapon of defence in the time of temptation, the assistant of our weakness, the strengthner of our virtue, the inspirer of noble thoughts and magnanimous deeds—our guide, sanctifier, and friend—the instrument by which we are enabled to overcome the world and the flesh—the great and prime agent in renovating, in refining, and exalting our spirits, and fitting us for a final union with Jesus, and with God, the Father of Jesus.

Such are our views of the worth of christianity as received by that class of believers to which we belong. That we are gratified with the successful efforts which have been made to secure the stated inculcation of it in this place, according to the form of it we deem most pure, efficacious, and consoling, cannot appear strange.—The brethren of this religious Society will permit me to offer them my heartfelt congratulations on the pleasing prospect, which opens before them. The time I have already occupied, will not allow me, were it proper in other respects, to express to you the reflections and feelings, which crowd upon my mind. I can only say to you—Persevere. Be true to the cause of genuine Protestant Christianity. Rever-

ence the instructions of Jesus rather than the fallacious speculations of men. Bear with meekness the censure to which you will be subjected from those, who deem your opinions a dangerous delusion, remembering that it is a small matter that you are judged of man's judgment, for he that judgeth you is the Lord. Let no one spoil you through vain philosophy, causing you to forsake the simplicity that is in Christ. Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. Above all, cherish a spirit of true, deep, and earnest piety; nourish within your breasts the divine affection of love to God, and let this affection flow out and manifest itself in genuine, diffusive, and exalted benevolence. Contend earnestly for the faith, but more for the charity, of the Gospel, endeavouring to give evidence that you have learnt of Christ, by exhibiting the temper he laboured to infuse.—Be faithful to yourselves, and to the Pastor of your choice, giving him a place in your affections and prayers, and aiding him by your co-operation and sympathy in a station attended with no ordinary anxiety, cares, and conflicts. And may the Father of light and mercy grant, that he may be your counsellor, and example, the helper of your joy, your comforter in affliction, and the assistant of your virtue and best interests, yet for a long time to come; and when your present labours, sufferings, connections, and hopes shall be ended, may you be severally conducted to that place, where there shall be no more sin, nor sorrow, nor separation, nor death.

NOTES.

I. I AM happy to subjoin, in corroboration of the general train of reasoning pursued in the present discourse, the following extracts from a Trinitarian writer so deserving of respect as Bishop Watson.

“What need is there that we should calumniate and detest one another, because we cannot agree in our notions concerning the person of Christ? He is the *seed of the woman*, whose office it was to bruise the serpent’s head; the *seed of Abraham* in whom all the nations of the earth were to be blessed; the *last Adam*, in whom all were to be made alive; the *Son*, whom the Father sent to be the Saviour of the world; the *Lamb of God*, which taketh away the sins of the world; the Advocate who now liveth to make intercession for us; the Judge, who will at the last day reward every man according to his works; these and many other truths may be predicated concerning Jesus Christ, both by those who admit and by those who deny his pre-existence. His authority as a Teacher is the same, whether you suppose him to have been the eternal God, or a Being inferiour to him, but commissioned by him; for the Gospel of Christ, whatever you may determine concerning the Person of Christ, is certainly sealed with the finger of God. We are under the same obligation to obey the precepts of the gospel, are incited to obedience by the same hopes, deterred from disobedience by the same fears, whether we believe Jesus of Nazareth to have been co-eternal with the first source of all Being, or to have been a man miraculously conceived, in whom all the fulness of the Godhead dwelt bodily.”—*Charge delivered to the Clergy of the Diocese of Lundaff, in 1784.*

“If God thought fit to accept for our redemption any price, there is nothing, that we know of, but his own wisdom, which could determine what price he would accept. Hence I see no difficulty in admitting, that the death of an angel, or of a mere man might have been the price which God fixed upon. The *Socinians* contend, that Christ was a man, who had no existence before he was born of Mary; but they seem to me not to draw a just consequence, when

from thence they infer, that an atonement could not have been made for the sins of mankind by the death of Jesus. The *Arians* maintain, that Jesus had an existence before he was born of Mary; and there is no reason for thinking, that the death of such a being might not have made an atonement for the sins of mankind. All depends upon the appointment of God; and if instead of the death of a super-angelic, of an angelic, or of an human being, God had fixed on any other instrument, as a medium of restoring man to immortality, it would have been highly improper in us to have quarrelled with the mean, which his goodness had appointed, merely because we could not see how it was fitted to attain the end."—*Charge delivered in 1795.*

II. I observed, (page 25,) that expressions implying that an infinite nature suffered, frequently occur in Trinitarian writers. Indeed the general strain of the language and reasoning employed by Trinitarians on the subject of the death of Christ is adapted to leave such an impression on the mind. If this impression is not designed, the expressions and reasoning alluded to must be regarded as peculiarly unfortunate, and it is time they were discarded. But they are necessary, perhaps, to uphold the popular notion of the atonement, and gratify a love of the obscure, the marvellous, and strange. I might fill pages with specimens from writers above the ordinary level of modern scribblers for religious Magazines and Newspapers. Dr. Barrow, whose claim to rank in the class of old English Divines with Hooker and Taylor is fully settled, speaks of the 'immensity of worth and efficacy, which must needs accrue to the death of our Saviour—from his being God.' 'That the immortal God should die,' he adds with singular infelicity, 'as it cannot be heard without wonder, so it could not be undertaken without huge reason, nor accomplished without mighty effect.' Works vol. ii. p. 290, Ed. Lon. 1716. Thus absurdly can men of the profoundest understandings, think and reason when fettered by the influence of theological systems.

THE
RIGHT HAND OF FELLOWSHIP,

BY THE
REV. CHARLES W. UPHAM,
OF SALEM.

THE custom of expressing by a formal and public act on occasions like this, that fellowship which ought to have existence among all the Churches of Christ, founded upon Apostolic example, has descended to us from the Fathers of New England. This custom is extremely simple in its nature and has universally been felt to be appropriate. An assurance of sympathy and co-operation must always be grateful to the feelings of one entering upon the duties of an arduous and responsible office. To the young Minister such assurance is peculiarly comforting and encouraging. However much previous study and experience may have done in filling his mind with the requisite knowledge, and in increasing his acquaintance with human nature, its promise and its infirmities, he cannot but feel that he is engaging in a work to him unknown—that a field of duty upon which he has never trodden, is outstretched before him. But if they who have passed through it, or who have gone so far as to be-

come familiar with all its paths, meet him at the entrance, and welcome him onwards, and assure him of their affectionate guidance and assistance and company by the way, his soul is gladdened within him, and he commences his journey with cheerfulness and confidence, knowing that he shall not want, at any time, friendly hands to conduct and sustain him, and friendly hearts to sympathise with him in every hour either of sorrow or of success. Appropriate and acceptable as the assurance of the fellowship of his brethren must be to the Minister at his induction, under ordinary circumstances, to his sacred office, it is peculiarly needful and peculiarly grateful when the Church in which he is to preside, and the flock of which he is to be the overseer, enter, simultaneously with the commencement of his ministry, into existence as an ecclesiastical and Christian community.

As you, my brother, have been duly chosen and constituted Pastor of the Congregational Church and Society recently gathered, by the good hand of our God, for Christian worship, within these walls, and as a large and venerable Council have sanctioned and solemnized your ordination, it remains for the Ministers and Churches to give a public pledge of their reception of you to their Fellowship. This duty they have directed me to discharge. It is an office, let me assure you, most grateful to my personal feelings. But before this act of recognition is performed, let its import and the relations that it indicates between those who are parties to it, be

rightly understood. It does not confer any favor, privilege or power. It is merely an expression of that which has an existence previous to, and without it. Had the Council, here assembled, neglected to extend to you the promise and the pledge of their Communion, as a regularly ordained Christian Minister you would have had a right to expect from them, and they would have had a right to expect from you, co-operation and sympathy. As there is, however, this disposition to cultivate mutual and reciprocal kind offices on our part and on your part also, it is right and proper that it should be manifested and proclaimed. The ecclesiastical relations existing between us, are relations of *courtesy* and *sympathy* only. They do not involve or imply any *jurisdiction* or *power*. As a Minister you are to call no man Master upon earth. The only established authority which can operate from without, upon your Church, resides in Him who is its great Head. It is the fundamental principle of Congregationalism, that each individual Church is possessed of actual and entire Independence, and is competent in itself to the discharge of all its functions. No ecclesiastical power can be made to bear upon it, except of its own creation and at its voluntary instance, and even then its extent is restricted to the precise and specified object for which it has been called into existence. So far, then, as absolute power and jurisdiction, so far as the rights, and if we can so speak, the "political relations" of the Congregational Churches, are

concerned, let nothing that the members of this Council have done or may do, be considered as authorising the inference that they possess any rule over you, or that you have any claim upon them—in these points of view, we are respectively and reciprocally separate, and, in the fullest sense of the word, Independent. But we are engaged in the same holy cause—we have the same Master—one great purpose is set before us—one high hope animates us—a common reward is held forth to us—a common home we trust awaiteth us. As the disciples of Him whose chief command was, “love one another”—as fellow workers with God—as joint heirs of heaven, we surely are called upon to take a deep interest in each other—to be at all times ready to hold out the helping hand—to sustain and comfort each other, and to cherish a mutual and lively sympathy and affection. Sentiments such as these, constitute the relations, and form the bond uniting us together. If they dwell warm and sincere in our hearts, then shall we be one body under Christ our Head—then shall we move harmoniously together, and be able to minister to each other continually encouragement and assistance, consolation and peace. As an expression of their desire to sustain such relations, and to enjoy such an union with you, our Fathers and Brethren of this Ecclesiastical Council have authorised and directed me to offer you, in their name, this *Right Hand*. Take it, as the token of their Fellowship with you—Take it as the pledge

that they will, at all times, stand prepared to co-operate with you in the great work that we are commissioned to perform—to do all in their power to encourage your heart, and strengthen your hands—to sustain you in your trials, to partake of your joys, and to cheer and aid you in all your duties.

We hail you, with pleasure, as a new laborer in the Lord's vineyard—may you be permitted to gather an abundant harvest. We bid you welcome to the pleasures and the consolations of the Ministry—may you find them great and enduring. We welcome you to the labors of the Ministry—Let not this salutation fall with discordant sound upon your ear. Much is complainingly said of the labors and fatigues of the Pastoral office. But why is it that this complaint rises not equally loud from all the other occupations of life? The truth is, that whatever may be our pursuits, if our hearts are in them, the more occupation they give us, the more extensively and steadily they develope and exercise our active powers, the more enjoyment do we derive from them. Hoping and believing, my Brother, that your best affections are all directed to the ministry that you have now undertaken, and that you have a real and fixed love for its duties—we welcome you to those duties—however laborious they may be, they will minister to your happiness. In the conscientious and zealous discharge of them you will receive a rich reward. Your brethren can express no more friendly wish, they

can breath no better prayer for you, than that as an advocate for divine truth, and the shepherd of a Christian flock, you may find duties and interests enough to give you full occupation—to absorb all your faculties—to engage all your affections, and to fill the whole measure of your desires.—If this wish shall be granted, and this prayer answered, they can ask no more for you—you can ask no more for yourself. You will here enjoy the highest happiness of which we are capable—you will move in the most sublime sphere of duty to which the powers of our nature can be directed—and you will secure to your soul forever the best blessings of Heaven.

As the first Minister of this religious society, your situation is one of peculiar trial, and requires of you, in an especial manner, prudence, watchfulness, care, and diligence. You and your people commence your course together, without the advantages on either side, of experience. Every thing connected with the order and conduct of a Christian Society, is dependent upon you for its institution and character—you are to lay the foundation of a Church of Christ—you are to impress upon it permanent features, and to determine its influence through future time. Although this circumstance throws upon you increased responsibilities and duties, it renders your situation at the same time peculiarly enviable. It gives you the means of acquiring an influence that can be rendered most valuable in the discharge of your du-

ties. There is no one existing in the recollection of your people, to divide their affections, and to divert them from you—You alone have stood to them, as a society, in the pastoral relation—To you have they first given the confidence that is appropriate to that relation—They will date their existence as a religious community, from the period of their union with you—The young, as they grow up around you, will associate with your name and person all that is affecting, impressive and venerable in the services of the sanctuary, and the offices of religion—And should it please God to continue you in his work, until a good old age shall have spread its honors over you, if your duties have been well performed, and your Master faithfully served, you will have a hold upon their affections which will never fail.

That it may be so with you, my Brother, is our sincere and earnest prayer—May you long live to be a minister of good to this People—When your course is finished, and the hour of your departure has come, may you be able, in grateful and devout confidence, and in humble imitation of our great example, to say, “I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world, while I have been with them in the world, I have kept them in thy name. Those thou gavest me I have kept—not one of them is lost.” Long after you have gone, may your name, already endeared to the friends of pure and rational religion, be held in grateful remembrance by the generations, who

are, we trust, successively to worship here, while the world remains—And when the gates of Heaven are thrown open to admit the righteous to their everlasting reward, in those mansions which Christ has gone to provide for them, may it be your blessed distinction to lead through them a company without number of sanctified spirits, who were here rescued from sin, and prepared to meet their God.





